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SECRETARY HERZFELDER ANNOUNCES REMOVAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES ASSESSED TO ENDANGERED SPECIES FUND

Waiver granted by Administration and Finance is retroactive for FY '05

Massachusetts Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Herzfelder today announced that the administrative overhead charges currently being assessed on the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund will be waived for FY 2005 (retroactively) and for FY 2006. These indirect cost rate charges significantly limit the direct benefits of voluntary contributions made toward the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, which helps protect and recover the Commonwealth's rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats.

"We are extremely pleased that we were able to work with Governor Romney and Administration and Finance to reach agreement on the need to waive these charges. Citizens who make voluntary donations to the program assume that their contributions will be used to benefit endangered species recovery in Massachusetts – and they should take heart in knowing that this is now the case," said Secretary Herzfelder.

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, within the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, was funded in part from 1983 to 2003 by voluntary donations made by the public on Massachusetts income tax forms. In 2003, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Fund was established as the sole revenue source for the Program and the Fund was moved off-budget.

"20,000 tax filers who give voluntarily to this fund every year recognize that the protection of our most vulnerable species is a fundamental responsibility of the Commonwealth. Overhead charges like these limit their contributions, so waiving them will go a long way towards returning the full force of citizen dollars to helping our most imperiled species," said Jack Clarke, Director of Advocacy for Mass Audubon. "We thank the Governor for supporting this request."

Indirect rate overhead charges have been assessed against expenditures made from the Fund since 2003. With the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's indirect cost rate at 34.16%, a \$10 voluntary contribution made to the Program was essentially reduced to \$6.58 in direct program services.

"Massachusetts sportsmen strongly support state efforts to protect the state's fisheries and wildlife and we're glad that 100% of the money collected will now be going directly to this cause," said Jim Wallace, Executive Director, Gun Owners Action League.

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